



**NOTES OF
PUBLIC MEETING
HELD ON
9 JULY 2015
AT
GNOME HOUSE, WALTHAMSTOW**

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

Ald Fred Jones welcomed all present. The Executive Committee had decided to go ahead with the meeting despite the Tube strike. It was regrettable that TfL, LOROL and Network Rail had all declined invitations to attend.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Glenn Wallis referred those present to the papers distributed with the Agenda. The main reason for calling the meeting was to set out the current situation and outline the likely developments over the next few years.

In 2007, Group officers had met new operators of the first TfL London Rail Concession, MTR/Laing, who had unveiled the plans for the new 2-car trains. The Group had immediately warned that 2-car trains would be insufficient to cope with the likely increased demand from a 15-minute daytime and early evening service, Oyster PAYG and appearance on the Tube map, but MTR/Laing, who later adopted the name London Overground Rail Operations Ltd (LOROL) and TfL were sure that they would do so. The new trains had commenced operating in 2010 and "the rest was history".

Electrification had been first announced in 2013, and it was hoped would still proceed more or less to schedule despite delays to schemes elsewhere, although one respected industry commentator had expressed doubts. Jeremy Corbyn MP had secured an assurance from Ministers, but the Secretary of State had then announced a review and the "pausing" of other major electrification schemes. The Group was asking Mr Corbyn to seek a further assurance. The Barking – Gospel Oak electrification was directly funded by DfT and TfL (£90m & £25m respectively), so might escape the Network Rail Control Period 5 reductions. A batch of 4-car dual voltage electric trains had just been ordered by TfL for the West Anglia Inner services, Barking – Gospel Oak, Romford – Upminster and Watford Local (DC) services. The first of these trains was contracted for delivery to TfL in December 2017. TfL had given BGORUG a pledge, later confirmed by the Mayor that the first of these new trains would go to the Barking – Gospel Oak route.

Meanwhile, TfL had no plans to alleviate the current overcrowding, apart from installing additional handrails for the comfort of standing passengers in the existing diesel units. Requests to remove/reconfigure seats had been ruled out by TfL. BGORUG had been advised by an former leasing company engineer that additional standing passengers would put the vehicles over their maximum operational certified weight. A contributor from the floor suggested the owning company would not let TfL make any further modifications to the trains. The Group believed TfL should be able to source at least one additional diesel unit, the reengineered former District Line stock would become available in the fairly near future, and if other operators purchased these it might release other stock that TfL could use (eg the Class 150s that

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formerly ran the service). There were also unused freight paths during the peaks, and the Office of Rail & Road (ORR) considered that a 10-minute service would be possible at those times. The overcrowding situation was critical and the Group had to try and secure some improvement for passengers.

The following discussion noted that the extra morning “PIXC-Buster” relief run to Willesden Junction attracted its own niche market of through passengers wishing to avoid the change at Gospel Oak; it also provided relief to the North London line. Even the first train on Sunday was “standing room only”. The half-hour gaps in late evening were too long (the Group had previously suggested a minimum 20-minute frequency at that time).

A member asked if the level of overcrowding had been measured and quantified – how did the line compare nationally? Mr Wallis said that the DfT provided such information but did not measure crowding on orbital routes such as ours; however, usage of the line had risen 19% according TfL figures quoted *Modern Railways* magazine.

Station on/off (million)	2006-07	2012-13	2013-14	% increase 2006-14	% increase 2012-14
NORTH LONDON LINE					
Hackney Wick to Canonbury	7.5	17.3	20.6	175	19
Caledonian Road to Kentish Town West	3.2	6.7	8.3	159	24
Hampstead Heath to Kensal Rise	8.8	14.2	16.8	91	18
Acton Central to Kew Gardens	3.6	6.0	7.1	97	18
WEST LONDON LINE					
Shepherd's Bush to Imperial Wharf (two stations opened in 2008, shared with Southern)	1.9	13.2	15.5	716	17
BARKING TO GOSPEL OAK					
Woodgrange Park to Upper Holloway	2.1	7.5	8.9	324	19
WATFORD DC					
Bushey to Headstone Lane	2.5	4.4	4.7	88	7
Harrow & Wealdstone to South Hampstead (LO only)	6.5	16.3	18.1	178	11

NLL & WLL Growth *Modern Railways*, June 2015

Station on/off (million)	2006-07	2012-13	2013-14	% increase 2006-14	% increase 2012-14
Stratford	13.1	25.6	26.4	102	3
Highbury & Islington	4.8	14.7	15.8	229	7
Richmond	6.5	9.1	9.5	46	4
Clapham Junction	18.9	23.6	25.3	34	7
Barking	4.9	8.1	8.3	69	2
New Cross	2.3	2.5	2.6	13	4
Willesden Junction	1.5	3.7	4.0	167	8
Gospel Oak	1.5	2.8	3.5	133	25

LO Interchange Growth, *Modern Railways*, June 2015

Assistant Secretary Graham Larkbey stressed that the Group did not seek to stir up trouble, generate criticism or create conflict with TfL or LOROL. However its primary responsibility was to represent its members, and generally the line’s passengers, their comments on social media reflected the widespread anger at the current intolerable situation.

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GUEST SPEAKER - CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

Ald Jones introduced guest speaker Christian Wolmar, respected transport writer and candidate for the Labour nomination for London Mayor.

Mr Wolmar thanked the group for inviting him, and began by saying that he had no great expertise regarding Barking-Gospel Oak line issues. He observed however that it was one of the few lines running wholly through Labour constituencies, and was very struck by how busy it had become. The Group's views on the overcrowding situation were totally justified.

The current state of the railways was very interesting, and the situation with Network Rail might reopen the whole investment debate, which we really did not want. Much investment had taken place in recent years, which was good when the industry was able to spend it efficiently. However the railway had had great difficulty in doing this ever since the split had been made between operators and Railtrack/Network Rail. No other railway worked in that way, and fragmentation was more of a problem than privatisation. Problems were still occurring 20 years later. Network Rail was now much more under government control, and Richard Brown was effectively a government spy on its Board. There was now to be an enquiry under Nicola Shaw (Head of HSI) and Sir Peter Hendy (ex-TfL head, now head of NR) to try and sort out NR's problems. It remained to be seen how the three of them would get on, and whether current Chief Executive Mark Carne would survive. It threw into question the CP5 £38bn settlement and the work programme. It was a very complex process which did not appear to work, and uncertainty lay ahead.

London would be getting a new Transport Commissioner, probably after the new Mayor was elected. Mike Brown (Head of TfL Rail & Underground) was filling the role in the meantime. Change at TfL might be a good thing – it was efficient, but expensive. London stood to benefit from major projects, but the North was not happy. There would be pressure on these projects, especially Crossrail 2. This had close links to the London Development Project, which aimed to open up NE London for housing development. Mr Wolmar had joined the Labour nomination race for London Mayor; none of the other candidates had much transport knowledge so they tended to copy his ideas. It was essential to ensure continued investment in the network; as well as Crossrail 2, the bus network needed improvement and new routes, and certain areas of demand needed damping down, eg individual car use. Possible measures included more bus lanes, congestion charging, encouraging the use of other modes, reallocating road space and pedestrianising Oxford Street. A "Green Labour" agenda was needed to merge the two cultures – a new politics was needed, and this would help attract younger voters. More information could be found on his new campaign website.

Ald Jones thanked Mr Wolmar for his presentation.

UPDATE FROM PC ROGER ANDREWS (BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE)

Ald Jones welcomed PC Andrews to the meeting. PC Andrews began by explaining that his BTP team was based on Platform 1 at Barking and covered the whole line. Over the last three months, crime on the line had been very low. Staff were out and about on patrol, and also helped Revenue Protection Officers. Between April and June, 22 offences had been recorded, of which 13 had been successfully detected.

Officers picked up a lot of issues while out on patrol. Particular campaigns included "Operation Guardian" (targeting sexual offences) and the new "Stop It Report It" campaign, highlighting the text number (61016) which the public could use to report incidents etc without it being obvious that they were doing so. This had proved very successful, and other areas were now adopting it. People were also welcome to email PC Andrews and the Barking team at direct at lorolnorth@btp.pnnpolice.uk or Twitter @BTPOverground. "You Said, We Did" showed how the force was responding to public concerns, and a national campaign against "hate crime" was now being rolled out. BTP wanted people to report incidents and problems, and more were now coming forward. There had been a particular problem at Barking, where public confidence

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in the station environment had been low. A number of benches outside the station had become the focus of anti-social behaviour, and BTP were trying to get some of them removed.

A member asked if CCTV evidence was an extra incentive to report incidents (people might be more likely to do so if they knew this back-up was available). PC Andrews replied that the system was now very good and was an aid to prosecution.

Another member asked about the relationship between BTP and the Metropolitan Police. PC Andrews replied that this was very good, and the two forces had a joint approach. They also worked closely with the bus team, and at Barking revenue blocks to pick up ticketless travel involved all three train operators (LOROL, LUL and C2C). All forces and teams now used the same radio network, which was a major improvement.

Ald Jones thanked PC Andrews for attending, and declared the public section of the meeting closed.



Christian Wolmar addresses the BGORUG meeting at Gnome House on 9 July 2015

